1: Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1920)1932
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deceased's senior wife (the eldest son's maternal uncle) because a man's senior wife owns the compound and has all the work of building it up. During a man's lifetime, the eldest son may not look into his father's bag or into his grain-store, or make use of anything personally used by his father.'[1]

*Widows and Children*: 'Widows go to the heir, but if he does not want them, they will know this, and already have spoken to the men whom they wish to marry. Before their heads have been shaved, they must not on any account have sexual intercourse with any one. Any man who is guilty of doing so, is said "to have cut the widows' strings" (*okoa pɔkɔ nwis*) and any infant whom such an adulterer looks upon will die. These widows' strings are made by an old woman who has ceased to bear children, and, after the funeral custom, she will cut them. After this they will appear in fresh leaves and people will know they are eligible to remarry. They will marry a clansman, not some one from another town. A son may not marry any of his father's widows if the father has ever had sexual intercourse with them. The deceased's brother, if not a *nyere*, may do so. The leaves which widows wear are *tanpiba* leaves (shea butter leaves). If a wife ever puts these on (during his lifetime) her husband will divorce her, and claim back the cows.[2]

'If the widow goes outside the clan of the late husband to marry, the heir will claim from her parents the cows paid, but deducting one cow for each child borne by her. Her father in turn will recover these cows from the man whom she then marries. The children then remain with the late husband's family. Should all the cows not have been paid when the first husband died, the heir, or whichever of the clansmen take her, have to pay the balance due, otherwise no new payments are necessary. It is taboo for the heir to take for himself two widows of the same man. He chooses which he will have and gives the other to his brother, that is, if these persons want them, otherwise they may marry a clansman.' Other customs in connexion with widows and the funeral custom will be dealt with under that heading.

*Children*: 'The children of the deceased belong to his fellow clansman who marries the widow, but across the Volta, among the Kusase whom we call the people of the West (*Toondem*), children of widows belong to the ghost (i.e. the late husband). If the widow marries outside her late husband's clan, any children she had by her first husband remain the property of his clansman, i.e. of the heir.'

[1] Compare the Nankanse.

[2] Compare Nankanse custom.

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606 will lose his wife; they can take her from him and return him the cows.'

607 *Privileged Familiarity*: 'A man may play and be familiar with his
603 sister's husband. A man can also be familiar with his grandparents,
648 for when a man has grand-children who drag him about, he blesses the Sky-God.[1] We, Kusase, also "play together" (*deeh taba*) with the Mampruse and the Gurense, because these tribes intermarry with us, and we have never sold each other, but the Moshi we never play with, for we used to sell them for food. The Gambaga and Bawku people, however, play with the Moshi, saying when they meet one, "Where do you come from, you worthless thing; I have heard that the Chief of your town is dead?" The Moshi will reply, "You fellow with the filed teeth, get out of my way; be off with you", and he will rush right into a man's compound as if it belonged to him.

'A man's mother's brother's daughter's husband (*daki*) may beat
607 him in fun. A man can swear at his wife's brothers (*ti tu tab*); we curse each other.'

582 *Marriages Prohibited and Allowed*: 'Kusase do not marry Moshi women; they eat fowls, when they ought to eat guinea-fowls.' As long as your own wife is alive, you must not marry your wife's sister's
[587] daughter. You may marry your wife's sister while your wife is still alive, but not a *nyere*[2] sister. A son may not marry a father's widow, because a son sacrifices to his father's spirit.[3]

764 *Kusase Funeral Customs*: The Kusase do not bury even a *Yi-dan* (head of a compound) in a room or yard of his compound, but outside in the *saman* farm. The head of a compound is, however, given a separate and new grave (*yaog*); this is round with a circular bottle-neck mouth. The soil is not filled in. The mouth of the grave is covered with a pot and plastered over with earth (see Fig. 88).

Graves are not communal, at most two persons being buried in one grave. The second person so buried may not be,

(*a*) Junior to the first.
(*b*) *Nyere* to him or her.
(*c*) Any wife, save the last surviving.
(*d*) Two children may not be buried in the same grave 'because they would quarrel'.

A male is buried in a goat skin; a female buried naked, save for a

[1] A grandchild may not look into a grandparent's ears or he or she will become deaf.
[2] See p. 8. [3] But see p. 508.

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
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This summary statement follows closely the formulations of the Tallensi themselves. They normally think of a lineage, a set of lineages, or a community, as a unit in relation to other units of a like sort, irrespective of its internal differentiation. Thus, Tongo people say: '*Tam ni Yamələgdɛm ni Siedɛm ni Biukdɛm a la yaab yɛni biis*—We and the people of Yamələg, and the people of Sie and the people of Biuk are the children of one ancestor.' The place-name serves to designate the social group. Once, at Sie, some young men from Tongo, members of an assimilated lineage, called on me. 'We've only come on a visit', they said, '*daʼa ti mabiis n a Siedɛm*?—Are not these people of Sie our kinsfolk?'

Such intercourse is constant amongst the three Talni-speaking branches of Mosuor's posterity (*tuʼu*). Biuk, both because of its fusion with the Gəris and its geographical location, is somewhat isolated from regular contact with its Talni-speaking clansmen. But the ties which control this voluntary fraternization emerge more precisely in a number of critical norms and institutions.

### *The Critical Norms of Clanship*

Most important of these is the rule of exogamy. Marriage is unconditionally prohibited between the four branches of Mosuor's posterity—i.e. between members of the authentic lineages of Tongo, Yamələg, Sie, and Biuk. The prohibition extends to the assimilated lineages as well, but not to all attached lineages, though the natives state it as if it applied to the entire sub-clan. They regard it as the inevitable corollary of their common ancestry. It is, therefore, the widest extension of the rule which prohibits marriage within the agnatic lineage. I discovered only one instance of the transgression of this rule at Tongo, and this occurred in abnormal circumstances.

A second critical norm always cited is: '*ti diit taaba pakoya*—We marry one another's widows.' A Tongo man has the right to seek the hand of the widow of a Yamələg, a Sie, or a Biuk man; but in actual practice remarriage of widows is restricted by so many other conditions that this leviratic right is mainly significant as an ideological index of clanship. It is the correlative of the rule of exogamy and, like it, the widest extension of a right which holds primarily within the lineage. Occasionally this right is exercised in its widest sense. The Chief of Tongo, for example, has availed himself of it to solve the problem of accommodation for himself and his retinue when he is compelled to visit the Administrative Headquarters at Zuarungu. An elderly widow at Biuk is nominally his wife and he may therefore stay in her house without embarrassment. In another case a middle-aged Yamələg widow elected to marry a stalwart young man from Tongo in preference to any of her dead husband's closer kinsmen. It is extremely unlikely that either woman would have been permitted to marry so distant an agnate of her dead husband if she were still capable of child-bearing. Nevertheless, it is an essential consequence of the leviratic right that if a man from one of the sub-clans should succeed in marrying a young widow of a member of another, no reprisals could be publicly undertaken against him, whereas anyone outside the range of clanship would be courting armed vengeance by such an act.

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587 When, some forty years ago, a Tongo man married a Zoo widow and his
X618 son was shot dead in revenge by a Zoo man, the Chief of Tongo forbade
a raid of retaliation. It was, my informants said, a just vengeance since
[682] 'we don't marry the widows of Zoo people'.

Again, it would be a serious breach of solidarity for a member of one of
X618 the sub-clans to abduct the wife of a member of any other, and I have
never heard of such a case. Warfare between them is inconceivable, so
627 the injured group would have to rely upon moral pressure through the
chief and elders of the offender's community. But these measures would
undoubtedly succeed, even in these days when rebellious young men can
flee to foreign lands.

X618 This is likewise the widest extension of a restriction which holds with
587 greatest force for the segments of a maximal lineage belonging to the
same sub-clan, e.g. for the segments of Tongo *inter se*. In a lesser degree
it applies also to ex-wives. A man who marries the former wife of another,
even if the marriage was severed for just and accepted reasons, incurs the
hostility of the first husband's entire lineage both towards himself per-
sona'ly and towards his clansmen as a group. Reprisals will be taken when
an opportunity occurs. When the parties are clansmen, feelings about such
acts become very bitter, and the more so the closer the tie. Marriages of
this kind take place from time to time, producing conflicts and reprisals
but not disruption of clanship ties.

X618 Another proof of kinship (*mabiirət*) usually cited by the natives is that
721 warfare between the four sub-clans was forbidden. They were allies in
war in the old days. They did not all come to one another's help, nor
were they each other's sole allies. But they could call upon one another's
assistance in the name of kinship. The recollections of the oldest men go
back no farther than the time of their grandparents, four or five genera-
tions ago. They tell of ancient fights in which Tongo, Sie, and Yamələg
supported one another; but Biuk, it seems, maintained an isolationist
policy in the wars and feuds of its Tale kinsmen. The greatest war still
remembered in tale and anecdote occurred forty or fifty years ago.
Yamələg became involved in it; and when Ba'ari raised the war-cry
against Yamələg, Sie and Tongo attacked Ba'ari on the flanks.

*Mosuor bii: a Maximal Lineage*

X618 These four branches of Mosuor's agnatic posterity (*tu'u*) constitute
what appears to be a single, dispersed clan—the only clan of this type in
Taleland; more accurately, it is a maximal lineage—the most inclusive
agnatic lineage to which any descendant of Mosuor in the male line (i.e.
any member of the four branches) can belong. In the eyes of the natives
an important qualification is that the four branches are of equal status
though graded in seniority. Tongo is the most senior because it remained
in possession of the original home of the clan—'*ti waabi daboog*, the
ancient home-site of all of us', they say—and has retained the custody of
Mosuor's grave and *boyar*, the shrine which symbolizes the perpetuity,
X618 identity, and common ancestry of the entire maximal lineage. Yamələg,
Sie, and Biuk follow in that order; but they no longer participate in
769 sacrifices to Mosuor. Each of them has its own ancestral *boyar*, enshrining

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
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attached lineages, as well as for certain ritual and political ties between some groups. Thus, one segment of Tongo has a special ritual role as intermediary in the politico-ritual relations of Tongo and Zoo, and this is rationalized by the same fiction; but it does not involve ties of clanship with Zoo.

There is a close parallelism between the inter-clan linkages we have described and the spatial relations of the groups concerned. Gbizugdem are the nearest non-Namoo neighbours of Zubiuŋ-Yakɔra on one side; Ba'ari is contiguous with them on the other side; and Zoo-Yiraaŋ live side by side with their clansfolk at Zubiuŋ-Yapaas. There is an asymmetry in these clanship ties which appears to be mirrored in the fictions accounting for them. Gbizug and Ba'at-Sakpar are linked by clanship ties in exactly the same way as they are linked with Zubiuŋ-Yakɔra, but neither has ties of clanship with Zoo-Yiraaŋ.

Zubiuŋ-Yakɔra has more frequent and closer relations and a stronger sense of fraternity with Gbizug than with its other two linked maximal lineages at Zoo and at Ba'ari. This is fostered by proximity and by the belief enshrined in their myth of origin. Thus, when a Zubiuŋ-Yakɔra tendaana dies and his funeral ceremonies are performed, the heads of all three linked maximal lineages have to send an obligatory contribution of porridge, specially prepared 'to set out for the dead (*zien kpiim la*)'. They act, then, in the same way as the other two Zubiuŋ lineages, which are also obliged to send this contribution. But Gbizugdem do more than make a merely formal acknowledgement of their ties with the dead man's lineage; they take part in the funeral to a much greater extent than Ba'at-Sakpar or Zoo-Yiraaŋ. Their representatives never fail to attend all the important ritual events of the funeral, whereas the representatives of the other two linked maximal lineages appear only at the exoteric public ceremonies, such as the final divination when the beer is distributed. The social relations of Gbizug with Zubiuŋ-Yakɔra give them a place, as it were, half-way between the other Zubiuŋ maximal lineages and the other two linked maximal lineages in point of intimacy and corporate cohesion. Every Yakɔra man knows the wives of the men of Gbizug almost as well as the wives of his own clansmen. He speaks of them all as his 'wives', for he has a right to inherit any of them if they remain widows. If he meets one of them by chance he will chaff her, as if she were a Zubiuŋ wife. Most of the wives of the men of Ba'at-Sakpar or Zoo-Yiraaŋ are quite unknown to him, though formally he has the same rights in respect of them.

### *The Gradation of Clanship Ties*

What distinguishes the bonds of Zubiuŋ-Yakɔra with Gbizug from their apparently identical bonds with their clansmen of Zubiuŋ is this: the latter are bound to perform all the duties of close *sunzɔp*, the former are under the much more limited obligation of giving expression to their ties of clanship through one or two formal acts. The latter, for example, are obliged to attend and to conduct all the important rites of a Yakɔra tendaana's funeral, whereas Gbizugdem come voluntarily, and if they undertake any task do so out of courtesy and friendliness. Similarly, the

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in sacrifices to their lineage ancestors. When an important sacrifice is due to be made to a lineage *bɔyar*, the married *pɔyayabəlis* of the lineage who live near enough to be able to attend, and especially the senior *pɔyayabəlɔg*, must be informed. Those who can, will attend the rite, and a prescribed portion (*tɔrɔg*) of the animal sacrificed is the due of the *pɔyayabəlis*. This portion, consisting of the 'waist' (*sie*), i.e. part of the vertebral column and some of the ribs, together with prescribed bits of various internal organs and the intestines, is divided among the *pɔyayabəlis*, both married and unmarried, who are present. The allocation of a prescribed portion of a sacrificial animal to any group or individual is the most significant indication, in Tale culture, that that group or individual has a recognized formal status in the social structure.

An outstanding event in the life of a lineage is the inheritance (*vaagɔr*), that is, the formal assumption of the custody, of a lineage *bɔyar* by a new lineage head. Being old men generally, lineage heads seldom survive succession to this status for many years. Thus, the inheritance of a lineage *bɔyar* is an event of fairly frequent recurrence at periods varying from five to ten years. It is an occasion on which the integration of the lineage is at its maximum. Every member, male and female, who can do so makes an effort to attend. Those who are heads of families contribute fowls and flour to be added to the sacrifices on their behalf. All cognates by descent through women of the lineage who live near enough are invited, and those who are heads of families also bring contributions for the sacrifice. In short, the occasion is a sacrament in which all the descendants of the lineage ancestors, through both men and women, participate, and it is regarded as a particularly auspicious sacrament.

One of the first rites in the inheritance of a lineage *bɔyar* is the transfer of the shrine from the homestead of its late custodian to that of his successor. This rite is carried out by one male member of the lineage, almost invariably a member of the segment whose head has become head of the lineage, and one *pɔyayabəlɔg* of the lineage, both selected by divination. Later, when many fowls brought by those present are sacrificed to the *bɔyar* to mark its transfer to a new lineage head, this pair are the first of the lineage members to present their offerings. Thus is symbolized the equality of status of men and women members of the lineage before the *bɔyar*, and the rights of women members and their descendants to the spiritual protection of the lineage ancestors.

As we have seen in our consideration of attached lineages, and as we shall learn more fully when we examine the relations of maternal uncle and sororal nephew,[1] there are circumstances in which descent through a woman is partially assimilated to the true agnatic line. To give only one example here, a sororal nephew (*ahɔŋ*) of any degree whatsoever, that is, any member of another clan who has a cognatic link with the clan in question through an ancestress however remote, is formally equated with the sons of the clan in the matter of leviratic rights. An *ahɔŋ* has the right to seek the hand of a widow of his maternal uncle's clan (*ahɔb yiri*) on the same terms as a true member of that clan. He is, so to speak, exercising the right, corollary to the obligation of clan exogamy, that

[1] In *The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi*.

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might have been his mother's if she were a man. In practice sororal nephews are rarely allowed to assert this right, and then only if their cognatic link with their maternal uncle's clan is not more than about four generations back.

Though the *pɔyayabəlis* of a lineage or clan never act together as a single group, since marriage disperses them among other clans, they are often thought of as forming a united body, the feminine counterpart of the men of the clan. This is seen most conspicuously in funeral ceremonies; and we can easily understand why, if we remember that funeral ceremonies are the concern of the whole clan. We have made a passing reference to the role of *pɔyayabəlis* in funeral ceremonies, but it deserves some amplification. For it is in funeral ceremonies that one constantly hears 'the *pɔyayabəlis*' spoken of as if they were a regular, organized group, sees them called upon to undertake tasks in a purely representative capacity, and observes the allocation of prescribed portions of food to them as of right.

Naturally, this is most noticeable at the funeral of an important member of the lineage or the wife of a lineage elder. Large quantities of beer and food have to be prepared for distribution at various times during the ceremony, and this is the work of the women. All the women assisting in the work at the 'house of the funeral' (*koor yiri*) are divided into two groups, in a way which shows clearly the division of the women in whom a lineage or clan has jural and moral interests, into those who belong to the clan by birth and those who are married into it. The *pɔyayabəlis* form one group. They have separate cooking quarters, and special tasks. The other group consists of the *dubɛnib*, 'those who stay in the room'. They are the clanswomen of the wives of the bereaved house, who are themselves wives of other members of the clan or of nearby linked lineages or allied clans. They may include the *pɔyayabəlis* of several clans, except, of course, those of the clan celebrating the funeral. They, too, have their own cooking quarters and special duties and privileges. They are called *dubɛnib* (from *dug*, room, and *bɛ*, to stay or be) because they are identified with the *dugdɛm*, the 'mistresses of the rooms', that is, the wives of the bereaved clan who are their clan sisters. Their principal task is to remain indoors with their clan sisters in order to attend to their needs, to console them, and to help them in the duties that would fall upon wives in this situation. Clan sisterhood sometimes has a very wide connotation in these circumstances. There are many Wakii women married to Tongo men. If one of them requires the help of her clan sisters as *dubɛnib*, those of them who live nearest to her or are most closely related to her will be the first to come, and her distant clan sisters will probably not come at all. On the other hand, there are very few women of Hill Talis clans married to men at Duusi. So if one of them needs the help of *dubɛnib* she will call on all the women of Hill Talis clans at Duusi and in neighbouring settlements. In such a case the solidarity of clanship merges with that of locality and of common values. This principle is carried so far that if a Gore woman married to a Tenzugu man requires the help of *dubɛnib*, she calls upon all the other Gore wives, of whom there are very few, of Tenzugu and of immediately adjacent clans, whatever part of Goreland

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where it always and necessarily brings together men of the same descent group, bound together not only by ties of blood but also by ties of residence, common interests, and common experience. The local concentration of the lineage in such close association with the graves of its ancestors and the land hallowed by their life and labour gives to the cult of the ancestors a binding power and directive force in the social life of the natives which is hardly equalled elsewhere in Africa. The like-mindedness, common values, mutual loyalties, sense of unity and continuity, so prominent in a lineage of small span and distinctive only to a lesser degree of lineages of greater span, can be translated directly into terms of contact, co-operation, and experience. So also the conflicts and rivalries that inevitably spring up in a human community, and occur as often in a Tale settlement as anywhere else in the world, have an additional significance, since they necessarily involve men who are kin to one another and belong to the same corporate unit. The principle of lineage representation and the concept of the equivalence of members of the same lineage have the maximum efficacy in these conditions.

The effect of the congruence between lineage ties and local ties is of no less importance for a woman than for a man. In childhood her closest playmates are the children of her father's inner lineage, that is, the children of her father's nearest neighbours, and their principal playground is the immediate vicinity of their parents' homesteads. Among her classificatory patrilineal relatives she knows best and depends most on the members of her father's inner lineage. Members of her father's medial lineage are next in order of importance for her, and more distant clansmen and clanswomen least important, though far from irrelevant. When she marries into another community she does not cease to belong to her natal clan. She maintains close ties with it, the most intimate being with the members of her father's inner lineage; and she thinks of these ties as ties with a corporate social unit, not with particular individuals only. Both to herself, her husband and his clansmen, and to her children, her 'father's house' (*ba yir*) is, in the broadest sense, her natal clan pictured as a local community, in a narrower sense, her father's medial lineage, thought of as a localized subdivision of her natal clan, in the narrowest sense her father's inner lineage thought of in the same way.

In her husband's home, too, the correlation of lineage proximity with local proximity enters continuously into the routine of her life. Her relations with the members of her husband's clan are graded in accordance with their lineage proximity to him. The men of her husband's clan with whom she has closest contact are her husband's nearest agnates and the nearest neighbours of her conjugal family. With him they form the segment of his clan which has the greatest jural interest in her and her children. If her husband dies, it is one of these men who is most likely to inherit her. The wives of all her husband's clansmen are nominally her co-wives or daughters-in-law; but in fact it is only the wives of his close agnates, women who are her nearest neighbours, whom she regards as effective classificatory co-wives and daughters-in-law. She and they will help one another in such tasks as floor beating or ceremonial cooking, and at critical times like a confinement or a death. She has bonds of

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of another medial or maximal lineage of his own or a closely allied clan, hostility between the two units is aroused and their normal relations are thrown out of gear. But usually steps are very quickly taken to set matters right. Either the head of the wronged lineage sends to protest to the head of the seducer's lineage, and the latter, backed by the lineage elders, makes the seducer confess and agree to apologize, or else the culprit himself, aware that public opinion would reprove his action, begs the head of his nuclear lineage to get the head of their medial or maximal lineage to intercede on his behalf with the head of the wronged lineage. It is at the homestead of the latter that the rites of reconciliation are performed by representatives of the two lineages. This is typical of inter-lineage jural relations.

A woman who commits adultery exposes her husband and children to mystical dangers. Among Namoos she is haled to the homestead of the head of her husband's medial lineage and subjected to the ordeal of entering the gateway (*zanɔr*). If she confesses she may enter safely. If not, the lineage ancestors will cause her to get ill if she enters the gateway. This is a very powerful sanction of marital fidelity among women and is one reason why adultery is not very common. Tallensi sum up the role of the lineage head in the sentence, 'All our (lineage) affairs are conducted at the gateway of our lineage head's homestead (i.e. the lineage *zanɔr*—cf. p. 208) (*Ti yela kama maana ti kpeem yir zanɔne*)'.

In the old days the men of a medial lineage all assembled at the *kpeem's* homestead before going out to fight. There they all took part in sacrifices to the ancestors and 'ate (*di*)' protective medicine to fortify themselves against the enemy's arrows. Nowadays they do the same before setting out on a communal hunting expedition, for there are many dangers to be faced—accidental arrow wounds, fire, and wild beasts. This is the service for which the *kpeem* is rewarded when he is given a hind leg of every animal slain by the sons of the lineage.

The *kpeem's* functions are most conspicuous in relation to the wives and children of the lineage, for they stand for the greatest common interest of the lineages. It is the reproductive powers of the wives and the existence of children that secure the perpetuation of the lineage and the immortality of the ancestors. The handling of a woman who commits adultery illustrates this. Similarly the lineage elders must be informed of, and the lineage head give his formal consent to, the re-marriage of a widow of any member of the lineage. A widow is in theory entitled to reject a husband chosen for her by her late husband's nuclear lineage and to choose any member of his clan of the right generation. If she does this she must get the consent of the head of his medial lineage and this is binding on the whole medial lineage. Her late husband's nuclear lineage cannot then object to her marrying out of that lineage.

The head of a medial or maximal lineage comes into the formalities of marriage for every member, man or woman, of the lineage, in his capacity as its chief representative in interlineage jural relations. The right to dispose of a girl in marriage is vested in her guardian the head of her nuclear lineage. It is he who receives and owns the bride-

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105 the ultimate sanction of its politico-ritual status in Tale society. The Talis and other clans that have the tendaana-ship claim to be the aboriginal inhabitants of the country, and the ritual sanctions of their office are derived from the Earth cult.

*The Maximal Lineage and Clanship Ties*

613 All politico-ritual offices are vested in particular maximal lineages or clans. These are the basic units of Tale social organization that emerge in corporate activities. They are defined primarily by the canon of agnatic descent. A maximal lineage is the most extensive group of people of both sexes all of whom are related to one another by common patrilineal descent traced from one known (or accepted) founding ancestor through known agnatic antecedents. The exact agnatic relationship of every member of a maximal lineage to every other member is, in theory, known or can be ascertained by genealogical reckoning. All the agnatic descendants of the founding ancestor, both male and female, belong to the maximal lineage. But in practice the male members are supreme in the conduct of lineage affairs and the *de facto* corporate unit is the group of male members. This is due in part to the fact that women members are bound to marry out of the lineage, by the rule of lineage exogamy. As marriage is patrilocal, a woman is usually separated from her male lineage-kinsfolk, and cannot easily take part in regular lineage counsels. What is more important, her children do not belong to her patrilineal lineage and they do not therefore contribute to its physical and social perpetuation. This is one manifestation of the dominance of males and the male line in jural and ritual institutions which, as we shall see in the following pages, is the principal factor governing the inter-personal as well as the corporate relations of individuals.

618 The maximal lineage is the basis of the Tale clan. A clan (or subclan, in a few instances) is a localized unit consisting of a defined segment of a maximal lineage, or a whole maximal lineage; or of two or more linked maximal lineages, augmented, frequently, by one or more accessory lineages incorporated into the clan by a fiction of kinship through a woman of the authentic male line. The commonest type is the composite clan, consisting of two or more linked maximal lineages of independent patrilineal descent whose association is accounted for by a myth of remote kinship or of age-old local solidarity. Every maximal lineage is exogamous, and with very few exceptions this rule applies also to the associations of maximal lineages we have called clans. Apart from local unity and putative genealogical linkage, clans are internally unified by common ritual cults connected with the worship of the ancestors and the earth.

● 587 An important corollary to the rule of exogamy in the maximal lineage and clan is the right of a man to inherit the widow of any male member

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of his lineage or clan, other than those whom he describes as his 'fathers' or 'sons'.

Every Tale clan is anchored to a particular locality from which it takes its name. In the central area of Taleland, around the Tong Hills, the present clan settlements appear to date back not less than eight to ten generations. But they have not been and are not territorially static. There are no strict territorial boundaries between adjacent settlements. The homesteads of a settlement merge with those of the adjacent settlements, and the boundaries between them are definable only in social terms, as a function of their ecological and politico-ritual relations at a given time. In the same way every segment of a clan—that is, each of its component maximal lineages—is anchored to a local subdivision of the clan settlement, though many of its members may be dispersed elsewhere.

A striking feature of Tale social organization is the system of inter-clan linkages which constitutes one of the principal forces of cohesion in the society. The genealogically and socially autonomous maximal lineage or clan is not a closed group. The component maximal lineages that form the segments of adjacent clans have ties of clanship identical with those that unite them to one another within their respective clans. Thus if two adjacent clans have segments A, B, C, and D, E, F, G, respectively, then A (but not B or C) may have clanship ties with D (but not with E, F, or G); B may have clanship ties only with E, and C with F. Each of these maximal lineages also has clanship ties with segments of other neighbouring clans. Thus each component maximal lineage of a clan has a field of clanship that includes the other segments of the clan as well as segments of other clans. This results in a network of interlocking clanship ties that embraces all the separate clans of Taleland. All the Talis clans and the main block of Namoo clans are interlocked in this way in two clusters which are in turn similarly connected at certain points. Moreover, this system of linkages ties the Tale aggregate on to adjacent clans of other neighbouring 'tribes'. Thus we observe that at this level of social structure—the skeletal level, so to speak—as in its territorial and cultural relationship to neighbouring 'tribes', Tale society is a segment of a greater society. The network of inter-clan linkages is one of the principal factors by which the socio-geographic region we have called Taleland is differentiated as a distinct segment of this greater society.

It is also one of the main factors of social equilibrium in Tale society. Dissension between neighbouring clans is kept in check by the mediation of maximal lineages linked by identical ties to both; and warfare is inhibited from disrupting the entire social order by the intervention of social and ritual obligations arising *inter alia* out of the fact that enemies are related directly or indirectly by clanship ties. It is this, in part, that gives Tale wars the complexion of acute family quarrels.

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desirous of having, and are indulgent to, a young wife (*pɔŋabil*), not only for sexual motives but also, and mainly, in order to have a strong young woman about the house to administer those creature comforts to which they are said to become more and more addicted as they grow older. Thus siblings by the same father (*ba ukɔla biis*) may differ in age by as much as a generation. A man's younger half-brother or sister may be younger than his own children though senior to them in generation. This has important effects on the lineage organization.

The custom of the levirate introduces a component of some significance in the constitution of the joint family. In the 61 domestic families of our sample there were 111 married men, and no less than 21—more than one in five—had one or more inherited wives. An inherited wife usually brings her young children by her first husband (if she has any) with her. They grow up side by side with her children by her second husband, who is responsible for their support. Tale kinship ideas make this a simple and self-evident arrangement; but it means, nevertheless, a division within what is normally the most compact and cohesive element of the domestic family, the matricentral *dug*, in accordance with the different paternity of the children. Generally a widow of child-bearing age marries a close agnate of her deceased husband—his brother or first cousin—who is, therefore, a close classificatory father of her children. This makes it easy for them to regard her second husband with some of the devotion and affection due from children to their own father, especially if they are still very young. Still, this is a weak place in the cohesion of a family, at which a split easily occurs; for no man, say the Tallensi, can wholly take the place of one's true father. If a widow marries a distant agnate of her late husband, the latter's heir may demand the custody of his children when they are old enough to do without a mother's care. This splits the *dug*. But it also creates compensatory bonds of uterine (*yog*) kinship between her sons belonging to different lineage segments.

Sometimes a man's dependants include a deceased brother's children whose mother has died or married out of the family. Such children are, for all practical purposes, his own children, but the sons frequently secede when they have children. Much less commonly, a man may have an orphaned sister's son (*ahɔŋ*) living with him in as intimate a relationship, ostensibly, as if he were his son or brother. Actually, both jural and sentimental reservations hedge round a sister's son's position in the family, for his descent bars him, in the last resort, from ever acquiring real filial status.[1] It is significant that in the old settlements extremely few cases of this kind occur, and it is always assumed that the nephew will eventually return to his natal settlement—though he does not always do so. In the new settlements, where personal kinship ties largely replace lineage ties as the basis of local aggregation, not only sororal

[1] Cf. Ch. XI below.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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or headman or important elder, backed as it often is by lavish gifts to her parents, security of the bride-price, and the attraction of his wealth and power or status. Few parents would hesitate to force their daughter to accept such an offer. Chiefs and headmen do in fact have an excessive number of wives. The five biggest chiefs and headmen of the Tongo district had between them about 160 wives of all ages in 1936. Their predecessors of a generation ago would have had perhaps 30 between them, at the utmost. The extra 130 wives they have means that probably 100 other men have been cheated of wives. This has no doubt diminished the chances of early marriage for a proportion of young men, but not so greatly as the men assert. All the evidence of Tale domestic institutions and of Tale genealogies goes to show that wives were always highly prized because they were always at a premium.[1] In consequence, no unmarried girl or woman of child-bearing age lacks suitors, and no wife of child-bearing age need endure an intolerable marriage. She can always find another husband. That women take advantage of their scarcity value is what one would expect; but they do so to a smaller extent than one anticipates. This is due partly to the strength and stability of the patrilineal lineage system, expressed in inter-personal relations in the power of the *patria potestas*, and partly to the great value women set upon wifehood and motherhood. Life is a failure to a Tale woman who never becomes a wife and mother.

### *The Stability of Marriage*

In consequence, partly, of the scarcity value of wives, but more, no doubt, of the conflict of loyalties and interests which has to be overcome, marriage tends to be unstable in the initial stages. A young man rarely settles down permanently with his first bride, and young women generally treat their first marriage as an experiment unless the husband is a much older man to whom they have been married by formal negotiation. In the course of collecting census material I noted the marriages of over a hundred men. There is not one man over the age of 30, approximately (excluding a few physically or psychologically abnormal men), who has failed to experience one or more unsuccessful and usually short-lived marriages. Most men of 30 to 40 can give a history of five

[1] I have no demographic evidence suggesting that there was formerly or is now a marked deficiency of marriageable women as compared with men in Taleland. My own crude demographic inquiries suggest a sex ratio of about unity among the Tallensi. Polygynous marriage, therefore, inevitably means competition for wives, even though women are usually married by the age of 16 or 17, as near as one can guess, and men rarely succeed in finding a wife before the age of about 25. The natives maintain that the age of marriage for girls has been decreasing rapidly since the coming of the white man (cf. my paper, 'A Note on Fertility among the Tallensi of the Gold Coast', *Sociological Review*, xxv, 1943, 3–4).

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or six abortive—or rather, to translate the native attitude into our own terms, experimental—marriages. Men of over 50 say, with a laugh, that they cannot remember all the women they have married who left them after a short time. Women are more discreet about their marital history; but observation leads to the conclusion that between 50 and 60 per cent. of all married women have had more than one husband.[1]

A marriage breaks up either through the action of one of the spouses, generally the woman, or through that of the wife's guardian. The Tallensi have no formal procedure for divorce. If a man wishes to get rid of a wife (which happens very seldom) he generally does so by withholding the bride-price, so that her guardian eventually recalls her, or he makes her life so uncomfortable that she deserts him. If a woman decides to leave a husband, she simply absconds. She may do so because she dislikes him, or because he does not feed her well enough, or neglects her sexually or otherwise, or, natives say, out of mere caprice. All women, according to the men, are fickle and gullible; a plausible suitor can seduce any woman. So if a young wife goes to visit her parents and stays longer than two or three days, her husband, be he an ardent young man or a sober greybeard, hurries off to fetch her, usually in considerable dudgeon, for fear that she may be abducted by another man.

Despite these initial pitfalls of marriage, families do get established and remain stable. Though the idea of marriage as a lifelong and irrevocable bond does not exist among the Tallensi, many couples do settle down for life, and many other couples remain united for a long enough stretch of years to produce one or more children.

Many complicated circumstances have an influence on this. Naturally, the jural formalities must be properly complied with. That is to say,

[1] Many of these experimental marriages are not marriages at all, according to the strict letter of custom, since they are sometimes dissolved before placation gifts have been made and often before any instalment of the bride-price has been paid. Some last only a few weeks. But they are always called marriages; for it is a fact that many marriages that begin in exactly this way do turn out to be stable in the end. Counting as 'wives' only those for whom bride-price was paid and who bore children to their husbands, I found, among a randomly chosen group of 20 men over 45, approximately, that only 2 had had 1 wife each; only 3 had had 2 wives each; the remaining 15 (= 75 per cent.) had all had more than 2 wives each. Altogether, these 20 men had had 71 wives (average 3·5 wives each); they had lost 21 (average 1 each) by death; and at the time of the census they had 45 wives (average 2·25 each). But most of them claimed to have 'married' from 10 to 20 times and were able to give a fairly complete history of these abortive 'marriages'.

Among a randomly chosen group of 20 women of child-bearing age—who were therefore not yet at the end of their matrimonial careers—6 (= 30 per cent.) had had only one husband each; 7 (= 35 per cent.) had had only 2 husbands each; the remaining 7 (= 35 per cent.) had had more than 2 husbands each, 4 of them having had more than 3 husbands each. Apart from the propensity to choose a final husband by trial and error, the custom of the levirate helps to increase the number of husbands a woman may have in her lifetime.

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husband and wife, the man is more his wife's physical and spiritual protector than her lord and master. Baŋ of Zubiuŋ-Yakɔra and Nindɔyat of Zubiuŋ-Kpayarayayar had a complicated dispute over an ancient cattle debt. It culminated in blows when Nindɔyat tried to lay hands on Baŋ's wife. That, declared Baŋ, he would not stand for.

A man is responsible for ensuring the beneficence of the ancestor spirits and other mystical powers towards his wife; and that he does this out of a sense of moral duty is evident when his wife gets ill. I well remember two particularly pathetic cases. Baripɛta, a handsome, industrious, intelligent, and popular young man, had one young wife. Shortly after the birth of their child, she was stricken with leprosy. The Tallensi are generally prepared to admit that this disease is incurable by their magico-medical methods. They say that it is contagious to the sufferer's young children. The bodily corruption of the disease disgusts them, and they say that lepers are difficult to live with as they become bitter and vindictive. Baripɛta knew all this as well as anybody else. His wife had become an economic and social burden instead of a helpmate. Yet he continued to cherish her, and, poor though he was, to try treatment after treatment for her, at the cost of many fowls and goats and pence. It is true that a jural principle was involved. As she had contracted the disease in his home under his care, he was responsible for her. He could not return her to her father, for instance. But it was plain from his behaviour and talk that he continued to care for her, with even greater consideration than usual, not out of submission to a customary jural rule but out of a feeling of immediate duty towards and concern for her.

It was the same with Ɔmara. His senior wife fell a victim to leprosy when her eldest children had already reached adulthood. He went to great expense in trying to get her cured. Explaining this to me, he said that, firstly, a sick person's nearest relatives never give up hope of a cure, and secondly, he was her husband, therefore he must try his utmost to save her. If he gave up she would be mortally hurt and might pine away. It was his duty to her and to her children.

### *The Sexual Relationship as the Corner-stone of Marriage*

The moral bond of husband and wife is founded on their sexual relationship, conceived as the means to the end of reproduction. It is this that makes the sexual relationship the corner-stone of marriage.

The simplest proof of the significance of the sexual relationship is the fact that a marriage is not properly consummated until coitus takes place between the partners. This is seen most clearly when a widow remarries. She may be given in marriage to one of her deceased husband's brothers by the head of his effective minimal lineage, or she may be claimed by her deceased husband's brother, and may acquiesce, to begin with. If she has sexual relations with her new husband she becomes his wife, whether or not the formalities of remarriage are completed. If she

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succeeds in avoiding intercourse with him she is not his wife, and may sleep with any other man without fear of being accused of adultery. Cases of this kind are common. A particularly instructive case was that of a wife whom Pal-Zəŋ inherited from his dead brother. As she was pregnant at the time, he did not attempt to sleep with her. She miscarried, but continued to put him off with excuses. The reason for this soon became apparent. An agnatic cousin ('brother' in native terminology) of Zəŋ's was living with him, who, being half blind, spent most of the day at home. This gave him the opportunity of ingratiating himself with the woman, and he became her lover. Though Zəŋ was indignant at the humiliation put upon him, and obviously burning with jealousy, he could do nothing about the affair. For it was not incest, as Zəŋ's marriage with the woman had never been consummated.

It follows from this rule that a woman cannot refuse to cohabit with her husband. It sometimes happens that a girl is given in marriage by her father to a man whom she does not like, and that she takes up this line of resistance. The husband then has the right to thrash her or to use other forms of force in order to make her yield. The story of how Baŋyɛlib consummated his first marriage is a somewhat ribald instance of this rule. The girl literally fought him off for days. Then one morning, as she was crawling out of their sleeping-room, his brother seized her by the neck and held her as in a vice, caught in the narrow doorway. She was helpless, and Baŋyɛlib, who had purposely stayed in the room, 'mounted her from behind', in the words of one of his brothers who told me the story. Another man I knew, in the same plight, sent to inform his father-in-law. The old man arrived at cockcrow next day in a towering rage and laid an ultimatum before his daughter. He was not going to eat or drink or budge from the door of her room until her husband told him that the marriage was consummated. The girl, weeping with humiliation, yielded immediately to this heartless form of third degree. Tallensi say that if a man has connexion with his wife for the first time in such circumstances she is at once impregnated—a bit of folk-lore that shows how marital cohabitation is felt to be essentially the means to procreation rather than to gratification.

Reciprocally, a man cannot refuse to cohabit with his wife. If he does, she will quarrel bitterly with him and leave him; and she will have the support of her father or guardian in this action. A polygynist must divide his sexual attentions equally among his wives, or else the neglected wives will quarrel with him and with their co-wives. Indeed, men say, somewhat cynically, that more family quarrels arise because of the jealousy (*yuur*) of co-wives over the sexual attentions of their common husband than for any other cause. Though a woman cannot prevent her husband from having a clandestine lover, she will resent it as a slight on her sexual attractions if she finds out, and make life uncomfortable for him in revenge.

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This corporate interest of the husband's lineage and clan in his wife, implying, on the surface, a diffused 'ownership' of the woman, is most precisely shown in the joint leviratic rights of clansmen.[1] It is, however, not far in the background of all the relations of a woman with her husband's clansmen, individually or collectively. For it is the commonest and most commonplace expression of the corporate unity and solidarity of the agnatic descent group. And it is not an undifferentiated collective interest or right, but very clearly differentiated in accordance with the segmentation of the lineage.

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The crux of this differentiation is the sexual relationship of husband and wife. As his sexual partner a woman is the wife of her husband in a rigorous sense that distinguishes him from all his clansmen, both in relation to herself and in relation to her paternal lineage and clan. Unlike the other reciprocal rights and duties of matrimony, those that pertain to sex are unconditionally binding on the spouses and strictly reserved to them. A man's authority over his wife in other respects is often shared with others—his parents, for instance. His sexual rights over her cannot be shared. In the economic management of the household a woman has some freedom of action; she has none in her sexual relationship with her husband. Nor is a husband sexually free, in the same way, for instance, as he is free to dispose of property acquired by his own efforts. Though he is nominally free to indulge in extra-marital liaisons, he can in fact only do so clandestinely and at the risk of friction with a jealous wife. Sexual relations are licit in wedlock; outside marriage they are illicit, especially for a woman; before marriage no social cognizance is taken of them if they do not involve adultery or incest. Love affairs between distant members of the same clan come into this category of tolerated illicit sex relations, hence their irrelevance to the function of sex in marriage.

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This is a consequence of the stress Tallensi lay on legitimate parenthood, for which marriage is a *sine qua non*. Tallensi express contempt for the Gonsi who, it is notorious, often constrain a daughter to 'sit at home and bear children' to augment her father's family. Though Tallensi do not approve of a girl's bearing a child before marriage, no moral stigma attaches to her. She has no difficulty in finding a husband, if she is physically and mentally normal. Her illegitimate child (*yi-yeembii*) is welcomed by her parental family, especially if it is a daughter. For instance, Pa'anbobis has a sister, now a staid elderly woman and mother of a legitimate family, who had an illegitimate daughter in her youth. This girl was married off by Pa'anbobis's father, who was entitled to her bride-price. She bore a daughter and was then taken away from her husband because he failed to pay the bride-price. When she married again her daughter remained behind as a 'child' of the family, and Pa'anbobis will receive her bride-price. People said he was a lucky man.

[1] Cf. *Dynamics of Clanship*, ch. iv.

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593 613 [587] replenish the lineage. They are under the ritual and jural authority of his own or proxy father, during the latter's lifetime, and may pass into the ritual and jural custody of one of his 'brothers' on his death. If he dies, a 'brother' will have the first and strongest claim to his widow's hand. Yet these are the men who must most rigorously respect his exclusive sexual rights over his wife and most staunchly defend them against all others. Men of the same nuclear lineage can substitute for one another in all relationships of filiation; for these are the relationships that constitute them a corporate unit. They dare not usurp one another's role in the marital relationship; this would bring them into competition with one another. The sexual bond is the heart of the unique person-to-person aspect of marriage, and sexual competition the negation of the tie of common descent and the greatest source of inter-personal and inter-group conflict. Lineage and clan have a corporate interest in a wife of any member of the unit as the mother of future members of the group, and in her offspring. But no member of the unit may have a personal sexual interest in her while her husband is alive.

613 835 577 We can see, now, why sexual relations with a sister or a daughter are so much less reprehensible than incest with a wife of the lineage. Incest with a sister or daughter does not destroy the solidarity of the males of the nuclear lineage for it does not imply rivalry between them. She belongs to all of them equally by birth; she is genealogically and socially identified with them; she and they already have defined rights and duties and sentiments of attachment to one another; as a member of the lineage, she has as great an interest in their solidarity as they have and the physical replenishment and perpetuation of the lineage is of as much concern to her as to them. In relation to her lineage siblings, sexual gratification as a source of pleasure is distinguished from the reproductive function. In terms of the latter she is identified with the lineage as a whole. The common interest a woman's agnates have in her as a woman is in her reproductive powers being placed at the service of another genealogical group in return for the bride-price, and not, as in the case of a wife, in her reproductive powers serving the interests of their own group.[1] If a man desires his sister or daughter sexually it must be a matter of mere lust (*kərih*), a foolish impulse, and not an expression of his desire for progeny as a socially mature adult. The gratification of lust, contemptible as it is in these circumstances, does not shatter the moral unity or injure the common interests of the lineage as does the usurpation of procreative rights over a wife. It does not, like the latter, destroy a father's authority over his son or a son's filial piety towards his father; for though it is a perversion of the social role of father or brother, it is not a usurpation of critical rights.

835 613 What has been said of the nuclear lineage applies in only slightly lesser degree to the inner lineage—the widest corporate unit responsibly

[1] Cf. p. 250 below.

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jectured that the taboo is connected with the fact that the rights over a woman's reproductive powers belong to her husband and must not be confounded with her parents' authority over her. If they came to the funeral of their daughter's child they would have to be received with respect, and it might seem as if they were on a par with the child's paternal grandparents. For the same reason, perhaps, a married woman's parents do not attend her funeral in person, but are represented by other members of her natal family and lineage.

For a man his son's children stand for the certainty that his line of descent will go on. The wheel of the generations has come full circle. When he and his wife die it will be announced to all the world. On the day of his or her funeral the youngest grandson will be placed before a drum with the drumsticks in his hands and the youngest granddaughter before a calabash with two pieces of cane in her hands. When the signal is given for the funeral to begin they will strike the drum and calabash and cry out, 'Oh my grandfather, oh my grandfather, oh my grandfather (*N-yaab yee*)'. And when the funeral is concluded the son's children and the brothers' sons' children will have their heads shaved in mourning in the manner prescribed for grandchildren. Half the head will be shaved and half left unshaved.

The equivalence of alternate generations is shown by the fact that a grandson may marry the widow of his paternal or maternal grandfather, or of any man whom he calls grandfather, other than his own grandmother. This rule is of practical significance when an old man dies leaving a young widow, and all the men of his inner lineage are either 'sons' or 'grandsons' to him. Then the grandsons who are old enough are encouraged to woo the widow, and the elders of the lineage put pressure on her to choose one of them so that she can remain a wife of that lineage. It was thus that Tiezien married his own paternal grandfather's youngest widow. At that time she had a young infant at the breast who was Tiezien's own father's half-brother. Tiezien was then about 18 or 19. He thus had the unusual experience of bringing up a child who was his proxy father. To-day Tiezien, a vigorous man of about 70, is ritual head of Kpata'ar; but his proxy father Nyaaŋzum, whom he reared, is the head of their inner lineage. Tiezien was made politico-religious head of the clan (*Kpata'ar na'ab*) over Nyaaŋzum's head according to the rule that 'begetting does not cross the *dug*';[1] but within their *dug* he is nominally subject to Nyaaŋzum's authority. This might lead to considerable friction between them if they were not as devoted to each other as they are. The marriage of a grandson with his grandfather's widow is, however, an uncommon occurrence, chiefly

[1] Headship of the clan, in this case, goes by selection from amongst the eligible elders, but usually comes to the oldest man in the clan. Tiezien could, however, not have accepted the offer without the consent of his proxy father, Nyaaŋzum.

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because it is not very usual for a man to have a grandson old enough to take a wife, when he dies, and also to leave a young widow.

The converse marriage of a grandfather with the widow of his 'grandson' of the same inner lineage is said to be permissible but not good. Tallensi think it is incongruous and therefore likely to be unlucky. I learnt of only one such case that has occurred in recent years, and my informants pointed out that all the children born of the marriage had died.

Old women make use of this rule when they are left widows. A widow must either remarry one of her husband's clansmen or else go home to her father's house and marry from there as if she were a spinster. For an old widow remarriage is a formality since she is past child-bearing, and will in any case live with her sons. So when she is asked to choose her new husband from amongst those of her late husband's clansmen who offer her marriage *pro forma*, she often announces, 'I choose a grandson (*man luogəra yaaŋ*)'. She thus satisfies the formal requirements and can go on living with her sons.

Within the lineage inter-personal relations of grandparent and grandchild are not extended beyond the inner lineage—that is, the range within which generation differences between individuals are recognized; but the term *yaab* is applied to any patrilineal ancestor except the father. On the mother's side only the mother's own parents and proxy parents are recognized as grandparents; but any lineage with which a person has matrilateral connexions is described as his *yaab yiri*. Thus any patrilineal ancestor's mother's lineage is a *yaab yiri*; and the letter of custom entitles a man to marry the widow of any member of his *yaab yiri*. In practice such marriages are exceedingly rare, for the widow's husband's lineage-brothers and clansmen resent them strongly. But there have been one or two instances in the past generation in which a young widow eloped with her deceased husband's classificatory *yaaŋ*. What the outraged members of the deceased husband's lineage most resent is that they cannot claim the return of the bride-price. The only sanction they can use is to refuse to sacrifice to their ancestors on behalf of the 'grandson' who has so flouted them; but this is a double-edged weapon. They may not use it, since the 'grandson' was within his formal rights in marrying one of their widows. Hence they would arouse the wrath of their ancestors if they sought to penalize their 'grandson' ritually. This extension of leviratic rights to matrilateral kin is associated with the notion that a woman might have been born a man but for the intervention of chance, and her descendants might therefore have been of the true agnatic line. It will be better understood when we have considered the relations of mother's brother and sister's son (Ch. XI below).

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former. The taboo emphasizes the superiority of the male members in spite of genealogical equivalence. There is an obverse to this taboo. The token funeral performed for a woman by her father's people, after her real funeral at her husband's home, is made for a *pɔŋayabɔlɛg-kpɛŋ* not by her own father's heirs but by the head of the inner or medial or even maximal lineage, her status-brother, so to speak. Tallensi say she belongs to the whole lineage not to her paternal family.

To revert to the levirate, the fundamental rule is that a man's widow may be inherited only by a 'brother' or a 'grandson' in his own clan or a linked clan, or by a 'sister's son' in an unrelated clan. The two principles involved are those of the equivalence of siblings and of the equivalence of alternate generations. A 'sister's son's' leviratic rights go back to the notion that his 'mother' might have been a man and a 'brother' of the dead man. He is exercising the rights that might have been his 'mother's'; hence this, too, is a recognition of the equivalence of siblings. What is absolutely prohibited is to inherit the widow of a 'son' or a 'father'.

In theory, as we know, these rights extend to 'brothers', 'grandsons', and 'sisters' sons' in the widest connotation of these terms. Joint leviratic rights is one of the critical norms of clanship,[1] implying that all men of the clan are 'brothers'. In practice these rights are neither absolute, nor are they equal for all men who are ostensibly entitled to them. Various factors enter into the picture, but the most important are the widow's preferences and the genealogical distance between her dead husband and whoever is seeking her hand. The strongest efforts are made to prevent a widow of child-bearing age from remarrying out of the nuclear, or at most inner, lineage of her late husband. His full and half-brothers have the strongest claim to the widow. This is based not only on the argument of genealogical proximity but on what this implies. They have contributed by their labour to the bride-price that was paid for her, and if she marries a distant clansman of theirs they lose the returns on this that children represent; for a man marrying a distant clan-brother's widow need not, in theory, refund the bride-price the latter's nuclear lineage gave for her. Actually a refund of the bride-price is often demanded in such cases and usually paid to avoid ill-feeling between the two inner lineages concerned. In addition, full and half-brothers are the dead man's coheirs. They take possession of the patrimonial property he administered during his lifetime. They accept responsibility for his debts and assume the custody of his children. For all these acts the Tallensi use the concept *vaa* (to inherit or succeed to). So they say a man *vaa* (inherits) his late brother's land, livestock, and children; and it is just, therefore, that he should also inherit his privileges and rights, especially in the matter of his widow. As brothers of the same nuclear lineage are coheirs of their patrimonial

[1] Cf. *Dynamics of Clanship*, p. 42.

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property it is good enough if she marries any one of them. In practice, a widow of child-bearing age who has children by her late husband usually consents to remarry one of his close brothers.

Next to a brother of the nuclear lineage, a brother of the late husband's inner lineage is considered to have a strong claim to his widow's hand. If a man dies leaving two widows of child-bearing age it is considered proper for one of them to be given to a member of her late husband's nuclear lineage and for the other to go to another nuclear segment of the same inner lineage. If a widow appears to be unwilling to marry her late husband's half-brother, for example, and is prepared to marry one of his 'brothers' of the same inner lineage, she is usually allowed to do so by the head of her husband's nuclear lineage. The new husband is still spoken of as having inherited the widow. In every case that came under my notice widows of child-bearing age married into their late husband's inner lineage if they had young children. But in a few cases, amounting to about three out of ten, these second marriages broke down after a time. Childless young widows often prefer to go back to their parental home and try their luck again on the marriage market.

Beyond the range of the inner lineage a 'brother' of the dead man has only the rights of a clansman. If the widow is of child-bearing age he will have to be very circumspect in courting her; for he can only marry her if she chooses him in preference to other claimants, and this means she must be courted. Hence it is more usual to speak of 'marrying' (*dī*) a widow than of 'inheriting' (*vaa*) her in such cases. But it would be a very bold woman who, left a widow while still capable of bearing children, rejected a husband's brother of the same inner lineage in favour of a clansman of his. Only in exceptional cases would such an action not create ill feeling between the two clan segments concerned. Such an exceptional case occurred when Baroog died leaving nine widows. His father tried hard to persuade several distant clansmen of his to seek the widows in marriage. The reason was that Baroog had no adult brothers in his nuclear lineage and so few in his inner lineage that they would not be able to inherit all the widows. For few men wish to inherit more than one widow at a time. Rather than let them return to their fathers and be sought in marriage by men of other clans, Baroog's father preferred to see them marry distant clansmen of his.

Widows beyond the age of child-bearing have complete freedom of choice in selecting a new husband from among their late husband's clansmen. Often such marriages are merely nominal. The woman continues to live with a grown-up son and her new husband comes to visit her occasionally and sends her a little grain now and then. If the widow has no adult son she will live with her new husband, adding to the labour power of his household and to its indirect sources of income through the gifts she obtains from her patrilineal kin, for example, or any private property of her own, such as a couple of sheep or goats.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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Inheritance of a grandfather's widow by a grandson, in the patrilineal line, is confined to the inner or at most the medial lineage for the simple reason that generation differences are not reckoned beyond those limits. Such marriages are not common because few men live long enough to have adult grandsons. The case of Tiezien, previously recorded, who married his grandfather Kuŋkoŋki's young widow is the only one of its kind I encountered. For at least another generation or two the custom of inheriting a grandfather's widow will probably survive in that lineage. For Nyaaŋzum, Tiezien's proxy father whom he brought up, is the last of his generation in that medial lineage, hence his widows will have to go to his own or classificatory grandsons.

A sister's son (*ahoŋ*) cannot marry his true mother's brother's (*ahob*) widow. That would be incest, since he identifies his *ahob* with his mother and therefore thinks of him as a quasi-father. He can marry his *ahob*'s son's widow or his *ahob*'s father's widow; for he regards the son as a 'brother', and the father is his grandfather. If the sister's son and mother's brother are uterine kin (*saarot*), marriage of the latter's son's widow to the former is generally approved of by the dead man's inner lineage—provided, of course, there are no better claimants among the dead man's brothers—for a uterine *ahoŋ*, as we shall see more fully presently, is considered to be almost as closely related to his mother's brother's nuclear lineage as a born member of it. Nevertheless, such marriages are rare, and the few instances I heard of all seemed to be due to special circumstances. In one case, in which I knew the parties personally, the woman was suspected of being sterile, and the sister's son was known to be a special favourite of his mother's brother; in others the women were apparently too old for child-bearing.

In theory any member of another clan who can trace kinship with the clan of a widow's late husband through an ancestress can be called a 'sister's son' or a 'grandson (*yaay*)' in the widest classificatory sense. I heard of two or three cases of such distant *ahoi* marrying the widows of members of their classificatory 'mother's brother's lineage', but the women were all elderly and the marriages were purely nominal. There was one case, however, in which a man eloped with the widow of a member of the inner lineage from which his paternal great-grandmother had come. This was widely spoken of as a scandal, and the pair were never forgiven by the first husband's nuclear lineage; but nothing could be done about it as the *ahoŋ* had the support of the letter of custom. The truth is that a 'sister's son' has no chance against the corporate solidarity of his 'mother's brother's' lineage. He can succeed only if they tacitly withdraw their claims or openly give him permission to court the widow.[1]

The levirate thus brings out clearly the social equivalence of siblings and shows how it is graded in accordance with genealogical distance.

[1] Cf. p. 240 above, and Ch. XI below.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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(*Pa m-biiga? Nyen ni i tau n-hab dɔya bii, pa nyenmi biig n-a u?*)'. As will be remembered, men quote the same maxim when they are asked why mother's brother and sister's son are generally so attached to each other. In support of this Tallensi usually quote two customs. Firstly, when an old woman dies, the oldest of her brothers' sons has his head shaved in mourning, as if for his father. He represents all his siblings, Tallensi say, in this act of filial respect. Secondly, a *ba-pɔk* has the power of pronouncing a curse against a child of her brother. She can, conversely, withdraw a curse pronounced by her brother if he dies without having done so, and if he has no surviving brother of the same nuclear lineage. But the social equivalence of a woman with her brother in relation to his children is limited by her sex. She is barred from exercising the jural and ritual authority and the rights of a father. In fact, the tendency is for her to look up to her brother's son as the future heir of her brother and the potential repository of authority in the affairs of her lineage.

Two examples will suffice to show how limited in fact are the jural rights a woman has in relation to her brother's children. They have principally a token value. When a funeral is being celebrated by a woman's husband's nuclear lineage her close lineage kin send a party of mourners to bear their condolences to the lineage of their lineage-in-laws. The party includes a number of young girls whom the woman calls her sisters and daughters. Before they leave again for home these young girls are gathered together and surrounded by a crowd of young men of the host clan. Amid laughter and good-humoured teasing the girls are invited to choose a 'future husband' each from among the young men. It is all a game, part of the hospitality accorded to the visitors. The selected 'husband' has to give a parting gift to the girl who has chosen him, so that she shall go home pleased with her visit. Among these girls might be a daughter of one of the woman's brothers of the same nuclear lineage. If the woman is particularly interested in the young man this girl selects, she may declare publicly that she is giving him the girl as his wife. Everybody pretends to accept this declaration as if it came from the girl's father, but in fact everybody knows that it has only a token significance and no jural force whatever.

Again, if a woman deserts a husband to whom she has been given by her father without having previously arranged to go to another man, she very often takes refuge with a *ba-pɔk*. There she is, so to speak, under a parent's protection but not subject to her father's authority. She knows that her *ba-pɔk* will sympathize with her and cannot in any case force her to return to the man she has left. Her father, satisfied that she is in parental care, will not seek to put pressure on her, at least for some time. However, a girl in this position soon attracts suitors, though courtship has to be clandestine, for she is still formally the wife of another man. But sometimes a suitor succeeds in ingratiating himself with the *ba-pɔk* and persuades her to connive at an elopement, a thing

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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604 which a father would never do. In theory, this means that the *ba-pɔk*
586 consents to the new marriage. In practice, her action has no binding
587 force on her brother. This rule applies also to an unmarried girl who is given in marriage by her *ba-pɔk*. A woman might have one of her brother's daughters living with her as a nursemaid for her baby. She might promise the girl as a wife to one of her husband's brothers. But her brother need not consider himself bound by this promise if he has objections to the marriage.

604 A father's sister is, in short, a kind of female 'father', but without the
577 jural and ritual attributes of fatherhood. A father's sister must be treated with respect. It would be grossly improper, for example, to joke with her as one jokes with a wife's sister; and to strike or abuse her, even if she were much younger than oneself, would be a sin. But the respect accorded to her is only a pale reflection of the attitude implicit in filial piety. It is much more a matter of etiquette than of emotion, as if it were merely conventional and not evoked by a feeling of moral obligation.

604 A marked characteristic of a person's relations with his or her father's sister is the absence of specific mutual obligations. Just as a *ba-pɔk* has in reality no rights over her brother's children, so she has no specific duties of either a ritual or a secular kind towards them, or they to her. This is the chief contrast between this relationship and that of parent and child or that of mother's brother and sister's child. Only a shadow of a ritual sanction comes into the relationship, in the form of the belief that the curse of a *ba-pɔk* can harm her brother's child, and in the notion that she stands under the protection of the same ancestors as the latter. Hence, though she cannot demand services from her brother's child, it is felt that a request for help from her should be met, even at the cost of
[789] some inconvenience. If a person offends his father's sister and she reproaches him saying, 'I bore you (identifying herself with her brother) and this is how you treat me. My ancestors have seen it, my fathers have seen it (*Man dɔɣi la k-i cŋəm là ŋwala; n-yaanam nyeya, m-banam nyeya*)', this has the force of a curse because she is invoking her ancestors who are also his ancestors. Such a curse would disturb a native, but not nearly so deeply as a father's curse or if a mother's brother refused to sacrifice on his behalf.

Because their relationship is devoid of a definite jural coefficient and is not subject to organized ritual sanctions; because, also, a father's sister stands outside the scheme of economic and domestic associations in which the relationship of parent and child is set, the relations of father's sister and brother's child are free of the undercurrent of tension found in those of father and child. A woman's bonds with her brother's children are fundamentally bonds of sentiment. That is why they seldom endure beyond one generation, or extend beyond the nuclear lineage.

The personal relations of father's sister and brother's child have much

5: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937)1938 FE11 Tallensi FE11



across a recently sown field of early millet already a few inches high. I chanced to tread on a shoot. Immediately one of the small boys stooped and carefully raised and replanted the blade of millet. 'Why did you do that?' I asked. 'Don't you know that is our food?' he replied reproachfully.

2. Every small boy of 6–7 years and upwards has a passionate desire to own a hen, and many of them are able to realize this ambition. If you ask a small boy why he wants a hen he will reply in almost the same words as an adult uses to explain the importance of 'things' (*bee*). 'If you have a hen it lays eggs, and you take the eggs and breed chicks, then you can sell the chickens and buy a goat, and when the goat breeds you can sell its offspring and buy a sheep, and when the sheep breeds you can sell its offspring and buy a cow, and then you can take the cow and get a wife.'

3. Maanyeya, a little girl of about 9–10 years, said that she had eaten none of the meat of last night's sacrifice. 'Why?' I asked. 'When they sacrifice to Zukɔk', she explained gravely, 'women don't eat of the meat. If they do, they will never bear any children, they become sterile.' 'What's that to you?' I said. 'Am I not a woman? Who wants to be sterile?' she responded almost indignantly.

4. I was playing with Tarɔmba and Yindubil (8–9 years), sons of the same joint family, and their friends. We were discussing parents. Tarɔmba and Yindubil, speaking together, told me the story of the latter's mother. Three or four years ago she had run away from their father to marry another man. They said, in the very words that an adult member of the family would use, speaking seriously: 'She ran away and took our belly [that is, she was pregnant by their father] and went and bore over there, so our child is there. Then she bore another child there. When our child is big enough we will separate it [*tolg*—the technical legal term] and bring it home.' These two were thus identifying themselves completely with the family, mother-child attachments notwithstanding.

Such examples could be multiplied tenfold, but they will suffice at this stage.

*The adult attitude about education.* Education is not an entirely unwitting process among the Tallensi. They set a high, and indeed overdetermined, value on their culture, and are fully aware of the fact that